On the report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of the principal public schools : a paper read at the monthly evening meeting of the College of Preceptors, May 11th, 1864 / by W.B. Hodgson.

ON THE

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE sight of this Report, in four bulky volumes, which weigh above ten pounds avoirdupois, may well serve instead of preface. Its contents are far too ample and too various to allow me to do more than call attention to one of its many aspects; and even so, all our time will be too short. The Commission included in its scope the nine following schools:—Eton, Winchester, Westminster, the Charterhouse, St. Paul's, Merchant Taylors', Harrow, Rugby, and Shrewsbury. The inquiry was divided into three parts:—"The first relating to the property and income of the several schools; the second, to the administration and management of them; the third, to the system and course of study pursued in them, to the religious and moral training of the boys, their discipline, and general education." (p. 1.) Of these three heads, it is exclusively the third, and even that by no means thoroughly, that I wish this evening to treat; looking less to the religious and moral training of the boys, than to "the system and course of study," and its ascertained results, especially in that department of study which claims the lion's share of time and effort. My comments may be best arranged under three heads: 1st, The Report of the Commissioners regarding results; 2nd, The evidence on which it rests; 3rd, The recommendations of the Commissioners. It ought to be further explained, that, besides the general Report and general recommendations of the Commissioners, there is given a full and elaborate Report on each of the nine schools, with further recommendations specially applicable to each. I propose, however, to confine myself entirely to the general Report and general recommendations. It is important to bear this restriction in mind, because it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to avoid injustice in speaking collectively of nine schools which differ from each other in not a few respects. It may be not unnatural, as it is certainly not uncommon, to take, as the typical representative of all these schools, Eton, the most richly endowed, the most numerously attended, the most aristocratic (though also the most backward and inefficient) of them all. But much that is true of the plethoric Eton may be very far from true, say, of the more spare-dieted Shrewsbury, the eminence of which, in spite of difficulties, is an instructive fact. At the same time, any

such unintentional and inevitable injustice belongs rather to the Commissioners than to me. It is on them and their authorities that I almost exclusively rely.

I. The *Times* (of 28th March, 1864) thus condenses the Commissioners' Report on the actual working of the present system, so far as relates to our present purpose; and this *résumé* will probably be accepted as less prejudiced, and so more trustworthy, than any that I could make.

"In one word, we may say that they find it to be a failure—a failure even if tested by those better specimens, *not exceeding one third of the whole*, who go up to the Universities. Though a very large number of these have literally nothing to show for the results of their school-hours from childhood to manhood, but a knowledge of Latin and Greek, with a little English and arithmetic, we have here the strongest testimony that their knowledge of the former is most inaccurate, and their knowledge of the latter contemptible. A great deal is taught under these two heads, but very little is learned under either. A small proportion become brilliant composers and finished scholars, if they do not manage to pick up a good deal of information for themselves; but the great multitude cannot construe an easy author at sight, or write Latin prose without glaring mistakes, or answer simple questions in grammar, or get through a problem in the first two books of Euclid, or apply the higher rules of arithmetic. A great many, amounting to about a third at Christ Church, and a fifth at Exeter College, fail to pass the common Matriculation Examination. Not less than a fourth are plucked for their Little-go, a most elementary examination in the very subjects which we have just mentioned; and of the rest many are only enabled to pass by the desperate exertions of College Tutors and 'coaches.' We need not follow this class of public school men through the remainder of their University career, since the duty of teaching has then devolved upon others; but for their shortcomings at entrance the schools are mainly responsible. Most of them, says an Oxford tutor of great experience and judgment,* 'are persons who were allowed as boys to carry their idleness with them from form to form, to work below their powers, and merely to move with the crowd; they are men of whom something might have been made, but now it is too late; they are grossly ignorant, and have contracted slovenly habits of mind.'"*

A few citations from the Report itself will serve to test the general accuracy of the *résumé* just given. The Commissioners say (vol. i. p. 26):—

"From the evidence the following conclusions appear to follow:—That boys *who have capacity and industry enough to work for distinction*, are, on the whole, well taught in the article of classical scholarship, at the public schools; but that they occasionally show a want of accuracy in elementary knowledge, either from not having been well grounded, or from having been suffered to forget what they have learned; that the average of classical knowledge among young men leaving school for college is low; that in arithmetic and mathematics, in general information, and in English,† the average is lower still, but is improving; that of the time spent at school by the generality of boys, much is absolutely thrown away as regards intellectual progress, either from ineffective teaching, from the continued teaching of subjects in which they cannot advance, or from idleness, or from a combination of these causes; that in arithmetic and mathematics the public schools are specially defective, and that this observation is not confined to any particular class of boys. It is impossible to misapprehend the effect which this state of things produces, and must produce, on the studies of the Universities. In the case of those who do not read for honours, at all events, the work of the first two years is simply school-work—work proper for the upper forms of a large school. The usual age of matriculation at Oxford (no record is kept at Cambridge) is between 18 and 19.

* The Rev. James Riddell, Fellow and Tutor of Balliol College.

* "The system (of public schools) has produced men most remarkable for their great public utility and eminence; but on the other hand it appears that after spending a great many years in these educational institutions, the large mass come out with a great knowledge of cricket, and a very good knowledge of rowing, with only that sort of Latin and Greek which is perfectly useless in after life, and entirely destitute of mathematical, scientific elementary truth, a knowledge of history and their own country, which it must be admitted are desirable, if possible, to attain."—EARL GRANVILLE, Chancellor of the University of London. (*Times*, 12th May, 1864.)

† It must never be forgotten that one main object for which boys learn the dead languages is to teach them to use their own. (Report, vol. i. p. 15.)

"The composition of Greek prose and Greek verse is a poor substitute for the faculty of translating such authors as Pindar and Thucydides fluently into elegant English."—Rev. C. W. SANDFORD, M.A., Senior Censor of Christ Church, Master of Rugby from 1841 to 1847; in Report, vol. ii. p. 11. 1864.

Of 430 who matriculated in 1862, only 22, or 5 per cent., were below 18 years of age; while 209, or 49 per cent., had attained the age of 19. It follows that, with a great mass of men, school education—and that education one which barely enables them at last to construe a Latin and Greek book, poet and orator, chosen by themselves, to master three books of Euclid, and solve a problem in quadratic equations—is prolonged to the age of 20 or 21."* (p. 24.)

"Natural science, with such slight exceptions as have been noticed, is practically excluded from the education of the higher classes in England. Education is, in this respect, narrower than it was three centuries ago; whilst science has prodigiously extended her empire, has explored immense tracts, divided them into provinces, introduced into them order and method, and made them accessible to all. This exclusion is, in our view, a plain defect and a great practical evil. It narrows unduly and injuriously the mental training of the young, and the knowledge, interests, and pursuits of men in maturer life. Of the large number of men who have little aptitude or taste for literature, there are many who have an aptitude for science, especially for science which deals, not with abstractions, but with external and sensible objects; how many such there are can never be known, as long as the only education given at schools is purely literary; but that such cases are not rare or exceptional, can hardly be doubted by any one who has observed either boys or men. Nor would it answer, were it true, to say that such persons are sure to find their vocation, sooner or later. But this is not true. We believe that many pass through life without useful employment, and without the wholesome interest of a favourite study, for want of an early introduction to one for which they are really fit. It is not, however, for such cases only, that an early introduction to natural science is desirable. It is desirable surely, though not necessary, for all educated men. Its value as a means of opening the mind and disciplining the faculties, is recognised by all who have taken the trouble to acquire it, whether men of business or of leisure. It quickens and cultivates directly the faculty of observation, which in very many persons lies almost dormant through life, the power of accurate and rapid generalisation, and the mental habit of method and arrangement; it accustoms young persons to trace the sequence of cause and effect; it familiarises them with a kind of reasoning which interests them, and which they can promptly comprehend; and it is, perhaps, the best corrective for that indolence which is the vice of half-awakened minds, and which shrinks from any exertion that is not, like an effort of memory, merely mechanical. With sincere respect for the opinions of the eminent schoolmasters who differ from us in this matter, we are convinced that the introduction of the elements of natural science into the regular course of study is desirable, and we see no sufficient reason to doubt that it is practicable." (p. 32.)

The length of this citation will, I trust, be justified by its almost inestimable importance. It exposes one of the most striking omissions in ordinary school-teaching, especially of the richer classes—an omission which not only is greatly to be deplored on its own account, but which goes far to frustrate the attempt to teach even what is included. Vainly can it be affirmed that natural science is already taught in many of these schools. It may figure in programmes; it may be made the subject of an occasional lecture during, probably, the intervals of time assigned to play; but that it is systematically taught, as other subjects are, and as it must be if any good is to be effected, is quite unproved.* Better that it should not be taught at all, than that it should be so taught as to furnish an argument against its admission into schools on a reasonable footing.

"It is clear that there are many boys whose education can hardly be said to have

* It is "beyond doubt that not one of these nine schools sends as many as half of its boys to the Universities, and that in the case of most of them the proportion is much less than one-third. These proportions should be borne in mind in considering the fitness of the system of instruction at these schools for the end in view." (p. 27.)

* Viscount Boringdon, when examined regarding Eton, thus replies:—"Lord Clarendon:—'Natural science is, I believe, wholly unattended to?'—'Entirely.' 'Occasionally there are lectures given; a lecturer comes down from London, and lectures on natural science?'—'Yes.' 'Are they much attended to?'—'Yes; they are a good deal attended to; it is with boys who have nothing to do in the evening; once a week, boys, who have nothing to do in the evenings, go there, but I do not think they attend much to them; a certain number do, but I think that most come a great deal for making a row.' 'Are the lectures generally of a popular kind? are they good lectures?'—'Yes.' 'Lecturers entitled to command attention, which they do not get?'—'Certainly.'" (Vol. iii. p. 257.) After this, can anything be more evident than that physical science cannot be taught in schools!

begun till they enter, at the age of twelve or thirteen, or even later, a school containing several hundreds, where there can be comparatively little of that individual teaching which a very backward boy requires." (p. 40.)

At first sight, this evil may seem to be chargeable, not on the public schools, but on the preparatory schools, or on the parents, with whom the Commissioners "do not hesitate to say that the fault chiefly rests." But a strict entrance examination, such as the Commissioners themselves recommend, and such as it is the duty, as well as the right and the interest (rightly viewed) of the public schools to institute, would very speedily abate this grievance, which now aggravates, much more than it excuses, their inefficiency.

. . . . "It is the office of education," say the Commissioners, (p. 30,) "not only to discipline some of the faculties, but to awaken, call out, and exercise them all, so far as this can be usefully done, in boyhood; to awaken tastes that may be developed in after life; to impart early habits of reading, thought, and observation; and to furnish the mind with such knowledge as is wanted at the outset of life. A young man is not well educated—and, indeed, not educated at all—who cannot reason, or observe, or express himself easily and correctly, and who is unable to bear his part in cultivated society, from ignorance of things which all who mix in it are assumed to be acquainted with. He is not well educated if all his information is shut up within one narrow circle, and he has not been taught, at least, that beyond what he has been able to acquire lie great and varied fields of knowledge, some of which he may afterwards explore, if he has inclination and opportunity to do so. The kind of knowledge which is necessary or useful, and the best way of exercising and disciplining the faculties (?), must vary, of course, with the habits and requirements of the age and society in which his life is to be spent. . . . . Hence, no system of instruction can be framed which will not require modification from time to time. The highest and most useful office of education is certainly to train and discipline; but it is not the only office. And we cannot but remark that, whilst in the busy world too great a value perhaps is sometimes set upon the actual acquisition of knowledge, and too little upon that mental discipline which enables men to acquire and turn it to the best account, there is also a tendency, which is the very reverse of this, and which is among the besetting temptations of the ablest schoolmasters; and that *if very superficial men may be produced by one of these influences, very ignorant men are sometimes produced by the other.*" (p. 30.)

"If a youth, after four or five years spent at school, quits it at 19, unable to construe an easy bit of Latin or Greek without the help of a Dictionary, or to write Latin grammatically, almost ignorant of geography and of the history of his own country, unacquainted with any modern language but his own, and hardly competent to write English correctly, to do a simple sum, or stumble through an easy proposition of Euclid, a total stranger to the laws which govern the physical world, and to its structure, with an eye and hand unpractised in drawing, and without knowing a note of music, with an uncultivated mind, and no taste for reading or observation, his intellectual education must certainly be accounted a failure, though there may be no fault to find with his principles, character, or manners. We by no means intend to represent this as a type of the ordinary product of English public-school education; but speaking both from the evidence we have received and from opportunities of observation open to all, we must say that it is a type much more common than it ought to be, making ample allowance for the difficulties before referred to, and that the proportion of failures is, therefore, unduly large. . . . . The school has absolute possession of the boy during four or five years, the most valuable years of pupilage, the time when the powers of apprehension and memory are brightest, when the faculty of observation is quick and lively, and he is forming his acquaintance with the various objects of knowledge. Something, surely, may be done during that time in the way, not of training alone, but of positive acquisition, and *the school is responsible for turning it to the best account.*" (p. 31.)

These passages may, and indeed must, suffice to indicate the point of view from which the Commissioners regard these schools, the standard by which they try their results, and the degree in which their expectations have been fulfilled or disappointed.

Before we proceed to cite a small part of the evidence in support of these very grave strictures, let me remind you, first, that the Commissioners are not the enemies, but the friends, of the public-school system—most of them, if not all, having been themselves brought up under one or other of its forms,—and that their purpose is to amend, not to destroy; 2ndly, that

these institutions are, for the most part, richly endowed, venerable from their antiquity and the associations with individual greatness which cling to their very stones, and amply represented in both houses of the Legislature, as in all the upper walks of social life; 3rdly, that their intimate connexion with the Church renders them in reality a branch of the great ecclesiastical organization of the country; 4thly, that they are superintended, in the main, by the ablest and most accomplished men whom, within the limits of the Church, it is possible to find; that the masters are, in general, handsomely paid, and not unfrequently exchange the ferule for the crozier, and still more frequently retire from the turmoil of the schoolroom to some not undignified church-living. The concurrence of all these circumstances ought surely to favour the development and diffusion of the highest and widest culture, if only the *wit* and the *will* existed,—the wit to know in what true education consists, and the will to carry this knowledge into practical effect. Terribly deep-seated must the evil be which goes so far to neutralize all these seemingly great advantages, and to make the results of all this vast mechanism so miserably meagre, on the admission of even its best friends!

II. The evidence on which the Commissioners base their conclusions is too extensive to permit, and too uniform to require, many extracts here. The Rev. C. W. Sandford, M.A., Senior Censor of Christ Church, Oxford, thus writes:—

"The head boys come well prepared from school. The standard in our class examinations in classics is consequently high. This is not affected by the state in which the average boys come to the University. The other studies may suffer in some degree. . . . . Some fifty or sixty young men matriculate at Christ Church in the course of each year. Of these perhaps ten will read for honours in classics. Such men would be able to construe with tolerable correctness a new passage from any Latin or Greek author, translate a piece of easy English prose into tolerable Latin, and answer correctly simple grammatical and etymological questions in Latin and Greek. The other forty or fifty would not. In fact, very few of those who are merely candidates for matriculation can construe with accuracy a piece from an author whom they profess to have read. We never try them in an unseen passage. It would be useless to do so. They are usually examined in Virg. Æn. I—V, and Homer, Il. I—V. But if they have not read Homer or Virgil, we examine them in whatever authors they have read last. . . . We do not test their knowledge of ancient or modern history, or of geography, at matriculation. We examine them in arithmetic, but not in Euclid or Algebra. Their answers to the questions in arithmetic do not encourage us to examine them in Euclid or Algebra. We do not examine the candidates in religious knowledge. But at the end of every term the junior members of the house are examined in some portion of the New Testament. The answers written by the mass of the men are not better than what we might expect from the upper classes of our parochial schools. Very few have that knowledge of the Bible that a Christian gentleman should have. Nor do many show a desire to increase their knowledge. Of the 150 who attend the divinity lectures, 20 will show that they they have been well taught before entering the University." (Vol. ii. pp. 10, 11.)

The Rev. G. W. Kitchin, M.A., Junior Censor of Christ Church, thus writes:—

"The average men bring up but small results of the training to which they have been subjected for years. There is a general want of accuracy in their work; even the rudimentary knowledge of grammar and Latin prose writing is far less than it ought to be. I fear that the elementary schools send the little boys up to the public schools in a very unprepared state, and that the public schools, to a great extent, assume that the boys are fairly grounded; which is not the case. The only subjects which are professed at school, and do not form part of our system of work, are such rudimentary matters as English composition, spelling, arithmetic, &c. In these there seems to be considerable deficiency. The University course of teaching is much hampered by the crude state of the men subjected to it, and by the necessity of supplementing the shortcomings of school education. Our system becomes, for average men, both narrow and vague. We feel that the most we can do for men who come up deficient in knowledge of grammar, history, language, &c., is to provide something for them to do; the time for real progress seems, in many cases, to be absolutely past. Men whose abilities lead them towards other than classical studies are much hindered from their proper pursuits, and sometimes stopped altogether, by that want of early accurate

training, which shows itself at every step we take in educating our men. Consequently, it appears to me that the University is obliged to spend much of her energies on matters which do not belong to her. If one is of opinion that eight to ten years spent chiefly on the elements of Latin and Greek ought to have been enough to secure a fair knowledge of grammar, then one cannot help regretting the weight which presses on us. But I am aware that many think otherwise, consider such a repetition of rudiments a good, and call it a general education. As a matter of fact, a couple of plays of Euripides, a little Virgil, two books of Euclid, or the like, form the occupation of a large part of our men during their first university year; and I cannot consider this a satisfactory state of things, especially as not a few fail in passing their examination in these subjects. It should be remembered that the best men, who go in for scholarships, are taken without the ordinary matriculation examination.... Of the ordinary men, a quarter might possibly steer their way through an unseen passage in Greek with fair success. Rather a larger number might manage an ordinary piece of Latin. Tolerable Latin prose is very rare. Perhaps one piece in four is free from bad blunders. A good style is scarcely ever seen. The answers we get to simple grammatical questions are very inaccurate. In arithmetic they have improved, as it is now understood that they cannot pass responsions without it. With a matriculation examination, whose standard is very low, and solely intended to prove that men have a fair chance of afterwards passing responsions, and with every wish to admit men, we have still been obliged this year to reject about one-third of the whole number who have presented themselves. As to average men, their exact knowledge of grammar, &c., is now tested by us; whereas, a few years ago, it was almost taken for granted. This makes me diffident in expressing an opinion about its improvement or decay. On the whole, I am inclined to think it has gone backwards, for I can easily imagine it better; it would be hard to conceive it much worse.... We have a vast number of young men from the upper forms of the public schools, especially from Eton. On the whole, their conduct is very satisfactory, and I can imagine no men more pleasant to deal with, had they had fair-play in respect of their learning. As it is, they come to us with very unawakened minds, and habits of mental indolence and inaccuracy." (Vol. ii. pp. 11—13.)

The Rev. W. Hedley, M.A., lately Fellow and Tutor of University College, Oxford, and Public Examiner, thus writes:—

"I think that the education given at the schools does not sufficiently prepare boys for the University course. The boys are not well grounded in the subjects to which most of their time has been given, and on other points less strictly academical their ignorance is sometimes surprising. In fact, I am sorry to say that many boys come to the University from school knowing next to nothing. These general remarks, of course, admit of very many exceptions, as regards both schools and individuals. The University course is much affected by the ill-prepared state in which the majority of the students come; and instead of making progress, a few years ago the University had to make its course commence with more elementary teaching, and to insist on the rudiments of arithmetic, and a more precise acquaintance with the elements of grammar. Tutors felt that it was degrading to both themselves and the University to descend to such preliminary instruction; but the necessity of the case compelled them. Had reading and spelling been included in the reforms of that day, it would have been not without benefit to many members of the University. I have sometimes had to remind my brother examiners and myself in the final examination for B.A., that we were not at liberty to pluck for bad spelling, bad English, or worse writing. If more of such elementary teaching were done at school, the University course might be both deepened and widened. Hitherto it has seemed useless for the University to enlarge her course to suit the tastes of men whose minds have never been formed at all by any methodical teaching, and who really cannot be said to have any tastes.... It is difficult to say what proportion of candidates for matriculation can translate a new passage of a Latin or Greek author. At my own college we consider such a test much too severe, the college would be left half empty if it were insisted on. The usual plan is to select a passage from some book which they have recently read. Perhaps eight out of twenty candidates could translate a passage from an easy author. (Of course I am speaking of the ordinary students, not of candidates for scholarships.) Rather more than this proportion, perhaps twelve out of twenty, would write a piece of tolerable Latin prose, and do a fair grammar paper. Of arithmetic and mathematics few of them know anything more than the amount insisted on by the University, and many of them barely that; the extent of their knowledge does not reach beyond vulgar fractions and decimals. And here I think that the schools are greatly to be blamed." (Vol. ii. pp. 16, 17.)

The Rev. D. P. Chase, M.A., Principal of St. Mary Hall, and Tutor of Oriel College, thus writes:—

"In my opinion, the previous education given to those who enter the University does not fulfil satisfactorily the purpose of grounding in the classical studies which they are required to pursue. The result is, that the minimum of attainment necessary for the B.A. degree is far below what it might and ought to be; while the difficulty which the majority of passmen have in producing even that minimum necessarily restricts and narrows the course. Much of the teaching given at the University is such as ought to have been given at school. This, while it tends to weary and disgust those who have been better taught, precludes any higher teaching of those who must be kept to schoolboy work. . . . I think that public-school boys, when they are good, are better than any others. They have a readiness in producing what they know, and a polish in their productions, which are rarely found in others. When they are bad, they are very bad. This seems to me to prove that the public schools have the power of giving the very best instruction, while their circumstances are in themselves an education; that all boys have there an opportunity of being well taught, but that on no boy is imposed the necessity of learning." (Vol. ii. pp. 17, 18.)

The Rev. Henry Furneaux, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Corpus Christi College, thus writes:—

"It may be fairly maintained, that the schools from which the University is fed either have not sufficiently grounded in classics and mathematics a large number of those whom they send us, or, as is very commonly the case, have allowed them to forget in the higher forms the groundwork which was taught in the lower." (Vol. ii. p. 19.)

The Rev. J. R. T. Eaton, Fellow and Tutor of Merton College, thus writes:—

"It has long been held among college tutors that the late age (18—19) up to which young men are retained at our public schools, before quitting them for the Universities, is counterbalanced by no corresponding increase in the amount of knowledge gained. In this, as in other points, the many are sacrificed to the few. While a really persevering and intelligent youth is gaining fresh stores of information, improving his powers of taste and composition, and grounding himself in his knowledge with a view to competing for scholarships at the University, the bulk of young men at a public school are going back, not progressing. They have reached an age when the stricter discipline fitted to boys is losing its hold; they have no adequate motive to engage their diligence. . . . On the whole, I am so little satisfied with the amount of preparation for the University course shown by candidates for an ordinary matriculation, that I am convinced either that the system of teaching at the schools is radically faulty, or (what is more probable) that little more can be done in the matter of Latin and Greek than is done, and that therefore some new direction should be given to the studies pursued in schools." (Vol. ii. p. 20.)

The Rev. Arthur Faber, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of New College, thinks that "in scholarship and mathematics the public school system has a marked superiority over that of other schools;" and that while "the standard is undoubtedly a low one, and might be raised with advantage to the University, public school education tends to qualify for a University residence *the great majority* of boys." (Vol. ii. p. 21.)

The Rev. Bartholomew Price, M.A., Fellow of Pembroke College, and Sadlerian Professor of Natural Philosophy, speaking "of mathematical instruction and attainments in Oxford, so far as Oxford and the public schools act on each other," thus writes:—

"I do observe a very marked difference between young men coming to this University from the great public schools, and from other schools or from private tutors, as to their mathematical attainments. The young men from public schools are far worse prepared. Whatever time they may have given to the subject, it does not appear to me that they have given that study and attention to it which has generally been so profitably bestowed elsewhere. Assuming the ability of the young men to be equal, not only do I find the attainments of those from other schools to be greater, but I find them to be better grounded and to have learned the elements more thoroughly and more carefully. Seldom do I meet with young men from the public schools who know more than the bare elements of mathematics; whereas others have gone through a sound course of geometry, which I take to be a most excellent disciplinary exercise, and have often well studied the principles of the modern analytical methods. This is frequently the case with young men who come from the Universities and schools of Scotland, and from schools in England of the class just below the large public schools. . . . The junior scholarship has never been gained by a young man from the great public schools. . . . I cannot say that the knowledge of the young men who come

to this University as ordinary students appears to me such as it might and ought to be. Frequently arithmetic, one or two books of Euclid, and a little algebra, usually no farther than simple equations, is all that they profess to have learned, and this amount is generally known very imperfectly. During the last four years I have become acquainted, through the Oxford local examinations, with the standard of knowledge of those subjects possessed by boys belonging to the middle-class schools; and I find it, for extent and accuracy, far superior to that which is exhibited by the candidates for matriculation from public schools who come under my notice. These latter can in many cases scarcely apply the *rules* of arithmetic, and generally egregiously fail in questions which require a little independent thought and common sense."

The evidence from Cambridge, while less extensive, is on the whole less strongly conclusive than that from Oxford against the public school system.

The Rev. J. B. Mayor, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of St. John's College, thus writes:—

"I think that the standard of University teaching and of the University degree is much lower than it should be, partly in consequence of the ignorance and backwardness of the men who come to us from the schools. .... My impression, after some years' experience as a lecturer and tutor at one of the largest colleges of the University, is that not more than two-thirds of those who come up for matriculation could construe an easy passage from a Latin author, and not more than one-third an easy passage from a Greek author, which they had not seen before. Probably about the same proportion might be able to translate into Latin, and answer easy philological questions. . . . My impression is that more is known of ancient than of modern history; but the majority are very ignorant of both, as well as of geography." (Vol. ii. p. 26.)

The Rev. W. H. Girdleston, M.A., Christ's College, thus writes:—

"I consider that the education generally given at schools does *not* give a satisfactory grounding in those subjects which form the especial studies of this University, and that the large majority of young men who enter into college show a very superficial knowledge of Latin and Greek; while of English literature, English history, and English composition, they are deplorably ignorant. . . . It is a constant complaint of our University examiners, that the mass of men are very badly grounded; and often the standard of marks required for a 'pass' is lowered, in consequence of the numbers who fail to answer a fair proportion of the questions proposed to them. For 18 years I have found employment in Cambridge in supplementing, as a private tutor, the deficiencies of school education, and in teaching the simplest rudiments of arithmetic, algebra, and elementary mathematics, and in preparing in Latin and Greek candidates for the previous examination and ordinary degree. . . The greater part of my pupils are from public schools, and I cannot but think that I have to teach them nothing but what they ought to have been thoroughly taught at school. . . . There is at Cambridge no matriculation examination except at Trinity College, and there the Greek and Latin subjects are fixed, and Latin prose composition is not required; yet I may call attention to the fact that, for the last two years, rather more than *one-third* of those who entered at Trinity failed at the first entrance examination. With regard to arithmetic, I can testify, from my own experience, to the almost universal ignorance of the simplest first principles of the subject, and may state that at the previous examination in October, 1862, there were 86 decided failures in arithmetic and algebra out of 260 candidates; while in the examination for the ordinary degree in June, 1862, one examiner found in the translations from the Greek author *mistakes in spelling* in the papers of 91 candidates out of 161. I think in Greek and Latin I find public school boys generally *more* fluent, and as superficial as boys educated elsewhere, but worse prepared in arithmetic and elementary mathematics." (Vol. ii. p. 30.)

The last witness whom I shall cite is the Very Rev. H. G. Liddell, who was for nine years Head Master of Westminster School, and who has been for seven years (since 1855) Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. Being examined by the Commissioners, he says:—

"I think those boys are generally better prepared who come from less fashionable schools. . . . The large majority of the average of boys I get from the great public schools are from Eton. I think the temptations to idleness that exist there are greater than in other schools, and I suppose that is the reason of their being less well prepared."

Being asked, "in regard to the average number of public schools, what would be the qualifications of the boys; for instance, can they write Latin, not elegantly, but correctly, without grammatical mistakes?" he answers, "No, generally not." The examiner, Mr.

Vaughan, having said, "I need hardly ask you whether they can write Greek correctly?" Mr. Liddell answers, "I never tried them in Greek at the matriculation examination." Being asked, "Can they, if a Greek author is put into their hands, and they are allowed to read it once over, construe a passage which does not contain words of very rare occurrence, and no sentence of a very intricate character?" he says:—

"'I can best answer that question by stating that in practice we are obliged to restrict ourselves to books that have been prepared. I do not think we should get even a tolerable translation of a book which they had not read before.'... 'Not of any passage?'—'If you pointed out an easy passage from Xenophon, in which there was not the slightest difficulty, perhaps you might; but you would have to select your passage with great care; you could not open the book at random and ask them to read a Greek passage. We do not get it well done even in the books that are prepared in a great many cases. I am speaking of those who come up merely to be matriculated — the average boys.'... 'Now, I have asked you generally with regard to the public schools. With respect to Eton, can you tell what is the state of classical attainments there?'.... 'With these average boys it is very much what I have stated. Their Latin prose is certainly not elegant or scholarlike. It is exceedingly bad. Even those boys who can construe pretty fluently, when you come to probe them in grammar, often fail to give satisfactory answers. They often fail even when the question is put upon paper, and they have plenty of time to think. Many of them bring up the words misspelt in the grossest manner.'" (Vol. iii., p. 400.)*

The evidence now quoted suggests several reflections, of which I venture to present a few in brief.

1st. Seeing that, in the main, "classics" and mathematics, and especially classics, are taught in these schools to the grievous neglect, partial or total, of all other subjects which are important either from their practical utility or from their educational influence, it might have been some consolation, if not some compensation, to find that classics at least were well taught and commonly learned. But, no! For the sake of classics, all other subjects are more or less neglected; yet even these do not seem to profit by the monopoly so largely assigned, and so vigilantly guarded. This discovery is most lamentable, yet most instructive. Just as, in economics, a "protected" manufacture is always sickly,—so in education, monopoly is fatal to the subject it would encourage. It is only just to add, that it is not to the public schools only, though mainly, that this stricture applies.

2nd. In the light of such disclosures as these, we can better understand the assault lately made on the education of the poor, so far as it depends on state agency, and the too successful attempt to restrict it virtually within limits not long ago believed to be too narrow for even the poorest of the poor. Very revolutionary indeed must have been the continuance of a scheme of primary instruction which should make the children of the humbler classes superior in real intelligence and available acquirements to those of the richer and higher classes. "Payment according to results"—a cry so mischievously potent to curtail the instruction of the former—may, with far greater reason, be commended to the attention of those who conduct the instruction of the latter.*

* The case is not better in France. "Il n'est presque pas de jour qui n'apporte son témoignage de la décadence des humanités scolaires chez vous. L'autre semaine, je fus à la Sorbonne récommander un candidat qui se présentait pour la deuxième fois aux épreuves du baccalauréat. Disant qu'aux premières épreuves sa version avait été '*bonne*,' je fus vivement interrompu par le vénérable examinateur: 'Dites *passable*,' s'écria-t-il; 'jamais nous n'en voyons une bonne! Et cependant cette version est la deux-millième environ que le candidat a mise sur le papier depuis le commencement de ses études!'—Fred. Dübner, *Réforme, &c.* 1862. p. 3.

* According to the last Report of the National Society, "The effect of the Revised Code has been to increase the demand for reading-books, copy-books, and slates, while that for books on history, geography, and all higher branches, has considerably diminished." At the last Annual Meeting of the Society, the Archbishop of Canterbury said:—"In order to meet the diminished contributions, it has been found necessary to give up the employment of many skilled teachers. The result has been, that mental teaching has not been

3rd. It is sadly striking that too commonly the school instruction of the rich seems to be expected to begin at the very age at which that of the poor is expected to end, or at even a later age. Complaints have long been rife of the difficulty of retaining poor children at school beyond the age of 10, 11, or, at furthest, 12. Yet it seems that 12, and even 13, is the age virtually often assigned for the commencement of the actual teaching of the children of the rich. The very years in which for the former *all* must be done, are by the latter passed with *nothing* done. Universities, condemned to mere school work, throw the blame on the schools, especially the public schools. These schools pass on the charge to the preparatory schools; and by these again it is shifted to the parents, who, having been themselves brought up in the old school and college course, tread blindly in the routine of custom. The vicious circle is thus complete, and each party, if even it desires a change, waits for the others to set it on foot. The institution, by the great public schools, of a standard of preliminary qualification, and a rigorous adherence to it, may abate this crying evil; but its removal can be effected only by a thorough remodelling of the course of private instruction. So long as children are left in ignorance of those studies most congenial to their age, and forced to acquire what is unsuitable to their mental condition, so long must the work of early teaching be irksome in its operation and barren in its result.

4th. These disclosures of the real results of public school teaching lead me to view with some surprise a recent jeremiad by a gentleman of high educational name, on the incompetency and untrustworthiness of private schools, with slight, if any, exception. If there are any private schools the results of whose teaching are as deplorably unsatisfactory as those now proved to attend public school teaching, it is indeed time that they should be "improved off the face of the earth;" and probably this consummation would long ago have been attained, had the public schools, the great educational exemplars of the nation, not neglected their duty, and wasted their mighty power. The better and, I believe, the larger class of private school teachers will assuredly welcome as an auxiliary, not dread as an opposing force, any improvements in the great public schools. Their hands would thus be strengthened, and their aspirations raised. Though their labours may be more obscure than those of public school masters, they are not less zealous; to them also are the names of Arnold, Kennedy, and Temple treasured watchwords, rich in encouragement and guidance. But even if names like these were less exceptional than they are, they would but strengthen the case against a system which, in spite of these, has been so signally found wanting.

5th. It must not be forgotten, that the results, whether for good or for evil, of

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so efficient as before. As to reading, writing, and arithmetic, that has been in no way affected; but in regard to history, geography, and general information, the demand for that description of knowledge has been diminished. He was, therefore, afraid that less general information would be given in the schools than before the new Code was established." (*Times*, 8th June, 1864.) "Mr. M. Arnold observed that the new method of examination did not afford Inspectors the same means of drawing out the children, and of ascertaining really what they could do, that was afforded under the old system; and when he (Mr. Walter) lately had an opportunity of seeing a school inspection, it struck him forcibly that that was the case. If it were not a breach of confidence, he might add that the Inspector was very much of the same opinion, and observed to him, that under the new system of examination it was impossible to get at the intelligence of the children, to ask them questions which would draw out their minds and prove what they really understood, so well as under the old system of inspection. The children were required to read a certain number of lines, to do a sum, and write a copy; but as to putting any question which would test their general knowledge and understanding, nothing of the kind was attempted; and when he (Mr. Walter) suggested that such a course of examination might as well be attempted, the answer was that there was no time for it, and that it would be impossible to get through the work if that system were pursued."—Mr. WALTER, M.P. for Berkshire. (*Times*, 1st July, 1864.)

which we have seen in part the evidence, concern almost exclusively those of the pupils who go up to the Universities. Of even these, say the Commissioners, "those from the highest forms of these schools, who are on the whole well taught classical scholars, notoriously form a small proportion of the boys who receive a public school education. The great mass of such boys expose themselves to no tests which they can possibly avoid." (Vol. i. p. 23.) But, as we have already seen, the Commissioners declare that only about one third of the pupils of the public schools, "taking them altogether," go into the Universities. "Not one of these nine schools sends as many as half of its boys to the Universities; and in the case of most of them the proportion is much less than one half." (Vol. i. p. 27.)* If such is the mental condition of the one-third who have had before them what ought to be the stimulus of further training at the University, what is likely to be the mental condition of the remaining two-thirds, who, on their leaving school, enter at once on the business of life, or on some course of professional training, for which the teaching at the public schools is still less likely to have formed a fitting preparation? The Commissioners regret that the test, which they proposed to apply, of "a direct and simple examination of a certain proportion of the boys," was "declined by the schools." In the absence of such or any equivalent test, we are left to an inference of probability. Few perhaps will maintain that, leaving out of view the prize-winners at Oxford and Cambridge, it is only the stupid and ignorant who continue their training at the Universities; or even that they are inferior to the majority who do not enter at the Universities. If the selected *sample* fail, what shall we say of the *sack?*

6th. The Commissioners, in their general conclusion, after saying of the *course of study*,

> "which appears to us sound and valuable in its main elements, but wanting in breadth and flexibility,—defects which, in our judgment, destroy in many cases, and impair in all, its value as an education of the mind; and which are made more prominent at the present time by the extension of knowledge in various directions, and by the multiplied requirements of modern life,"—and of the *organization* and *teaching*, regarded not as to its range, but as to its force and efficacy,—"we have been unable to resist the conclusion, that these schools, in very different degrees, are too indulgent to idleness, or struggle ineffectually with it; and that they consequently send out a large proportion of men of idle habits and empty and uncultivated minds,"—go on to say,—"Of their discipline and moral training we have been able to speak in terms of high praise." (Vol. i. p. 55.)

This estimate, which it would be presumptuous in me formally to contradict, I think it would be not less credulous to accept. When I remember the applause which almost everywhere greeted, some years ago, the melancholy revelations of "Tom Brown," I am very distrustful of the general notion of the morality, whether possible or desirable, among schoolboys. In the absence of more direct means of judging, I note the indications, casually given in the Commissioners' Report, of the moral state of Eton, less casually of that of Westminster. I fix my eye on the idleness and mental vacuity admitted to be too common, and I rest in the conviction, that idleness is the fruitful parent of vice, and that the devil dances not more surely in the empty *pocket* than in the empty *head*. It is not wonderful that in a country where successive generations of the leaders of opinion have been subject to the public school *régime*, such as it used to be, the general standard of morals by which youth are tried should be as low as is undoubtedly the general estimate of what is possible to be learned in school, still more of the influence of judicious school-training on character and conduct in after life. The "Tom Brown" code of school ethics often

* At Christmas, 1861, the nine schools contained 2696 boys between 8 and 19 years of age, the average being about 15. (Vol. i. p. 11.)

reminds me of the Irish father who said that of all his sons he liked his youngest best, "because," said he, "he never kicks me when I'm down." It is scarcely more exacting, or more difficult to please.

III. Time permits only a very brief notice of the general recommendations of the Commissioners. They are given under thirty-two heads, but many of them are beyond our present scope.

"(7) In the selection of the masters, the field of choice should in no case be confined to persons educated at the school. (8) The classical languages and literature should continue to hold the principal place in the course of study. (9) In addition to the study of classics and to religious teaching, every boy should be taught arithmetic and mathematics; one modern language at least, which should be either French or German; some one branch at least of natural science, and either drawing or music. Care should be taken to ensure that the boys acquire a good general knowledge of geography and of ancient history, some acquaintance with modern history,* and a command of pure grammatical English. . . . (11) The teaching of natural science should, wherever practicable, include two main branches—1, chemistry and physics; 2, comparative physiology and natural history, both animal and vegetable. . . . . (13) Arrangements should be made for allowing boys, after arriving at a certain place in the school, and upon the request of their parents or guardians, to drop some portion of their classical work (for example, Latin verse and Greek composition), in order to devote more time to mathematics, modern languages, or natural science; or, on the other hand, to discontinue wholly or in part natural science, modern languages, or mathematics, in order to give more time to classics or some other study. . . . (16) The promotion of the boys from one classical form to another, and the places assigned to them in such promotion, should depend upon their progress, not only in classics and divinity, but also in arithmetic and mathematics; and likewise, in the case of those boys who are studying modern languages or natural science, on their progress in those subjects respectively. (17) The scale of marks should be so framed as to give substantial weight and encouragement to the non-classical studies.* . . . .

"(23) Every boy should be required, before admission to the school, to pass an entrance examination, and to show himself well grounded for his age in classics and arithmetic, and in the elements of French and German. (24) No boy should be promoted from one form to another, on ground of seniority, unless he has passed a satisfactory examination in the work of the form into which he is to be promoted. (25) No boy should be suffered to remain in the school who fails to make reasonable progress in it. . . . . (32) The Head Master should be required to make an annual report to the Governors on the state of the school, and this report should be printed." (Vol. i. pp. 53—55.)

Without attempting to criticise these recommendations in detail, I may say that, in their general spirit and tendency, they are a worthy sequel of a Report which, admirably written, bears traces everywhere of anxious yet calm and patient deliberation, clear and impartial judgment, and earnest desire to conciliate the claims of the present, if not the future, with respect for the past; to repair, enlarge, and adapt the existing system, not to destroy it and build afresh upon its ruins. No one interested in education can fail to find in its almost every page ample material for reflection.

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* The difference between the phrases, "a good general knowledge of *ancient* history," and "some acquaintance with *modern* history," is equally significant and strange.—W. B. H.

"Young people should learn the contemporary history in which they live, and of which they are a part. Vicksburg is as important as Saguntum; to follow Forey from the coast to Puebla (and learn why he went) is as exciting as accompanying Cortez; and to know something of the history and the sayings and the doings of those who would like to govern us, is at least as important for our youth of either sex, as to learn the constitution of the Roman legislature."—*Athenæum*, 20th June, 1863.

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* The following scheme for the distribution of the school or class lessons in a week is suggested as furnishing a comparative scale (p. 34):—

1. Classics, with History and Divinity	11
2. Arithmetic and Mathematics	3
3. French or German	2
4. Natural Science	2
5. Music or Drawing	2
School Lessons, taking about an hour each,	20

"It is here assumed that the school lessons take about an hour each, and that they will be such as to demand for preparation in the case of classics 10 additional hours, and in those of modern languages and natural science respectively, at least two additional hours, in the course of the week; and that composition will demand about five hours." (In all 37 hours per week, out of 144, not reckoning Sunday; 107 remaining for sleep, meals, and exercise—say 18, or three-fourths, per day.)

Nevertheless, while I cheerfully admit that these suggestions go as far in the right direction as could fairly be expected, with due regard to either the inevitable prepossessions of the Commissioners, or the great practical difficulties with which inveterate custom and neglect have perplexed the question, I am very far from thinking that they go to the root of the evil, or do more than facilitate future changes far more extensive than any now possible, or perhaps safe. Progress, to be sure, must be gradual; and sudden and sweeping revolution is only less to be dreaded than total immobility or torpor.

It was not to be expected that the Commissioners should raise the question, which, in spite of many well meant attempts to extend to the middle and lower classes what are called the benefits of public school training, is gradually forcing itself on the public mind—whether the system of separating boys from their homes, and herding them in large numbers in barrack-monasteries, away from the blessed influences of the family, be indeed the true ideal of education; and whether the evil which exists to a smaller extent in private boarding schools be not magnified and intensified in the great public schools. A judicious provision for an exceptional and unfortunate necessity is widely different from the advocacy of a system as in itself the best that can be even desired. This is a grave question, which I must here only indicate, without stopping to discuss.

But there is another question, only less important, which the Commissioners have tried to settle, and which I cannot pass over. I belong to a large and ever-increasing class of persons who, by observation, reflection, and experience, are led to believe the present system of classical teaching to be a superstition, a blunder, and a failure. Historically explicable as a necessity of a bygone age, its continuance in our day seems to me a mischievous anachronism. Animated by a deep sense of the value of Roman and Greek literature, and of the good which its study might effect under a wiser and more natural method of instruction, and truly grateful for the benefit I have myself derived from it—dearly purchased as it has been—I am not to be deterred or dissuaded from uttering convictions which I have long and carefully matured. It is in the interest of classical instruction itself that I would speak. Hitherto neither the languages nor the literatures of Greece or Rome have been in any worthy sense learned by any but a very minute fraction of the great mass of boys who have spent eight, ten, and more of the most precious years of their lives in the wearisome drudgery which ancestral wisdom has decided to be the inseparable accompaniment, and even the indispensable instrument, of this kind of learning. Hitherto even the few, with rare exceptions, know little, while the many know nothing, of what they are seeming to learn; the training, thus practically null in respect of knowledge, has done, and is doing, much to foster habits of idleness, distate, and incapacity for mental exertion, obtuseness, and confusion of mind; and lastly, while these subjects are not *learned*, other subjects, more congenial to youthful faculty and taste, as well as more practically useful in after life, and at the same time better fitted as educational agents, are, for the sake of these, *not taught*. "If," says the *Times* (28th April, 1864), "we had any reason to believe that Latin and Greek had been displaced by French, or geography, or music, or the elements of natural science, we might, at any rate, feel that we had gained something in place of what we had lost." But no! Just as a great German philosopher is reported to have said that only one man living understood his system, and he didn't; so boys learn only Latin and Greek, and these they do not learn. Yet singular, almost incredible, is the indifferent levity with which this

admitted result is tolerated, even by those who profess to regret it, and to wish it changed. Only the other day, this same *Times* said (7th May, 1864):—

"If you despise an accomplishment, you may live to want it. Indeed, there are few men who do not confess, some time or other, that they would give a good deal to be able to learn what they could have learnt easily in their youth. It is very common to see gentlemen long past the freshness of youth making violent efforts to learn music, chymistry, geology, botany, and a good many other things. At a much earlier date, a young gentleman, having by great interest got his name on the Foreign-office, finds himself condemned to a French master for a twelvemonth before he can get an appointment; or he travels, and finds an impassable gulf between himself and every human being who cannot speak English. He may even become painfully conscious of a much more serious defect, in a total ignorance of English literature, down to the composition of a sentence, the wording of a note, or the spelling of words in common use. He may expose himself to those with whom he has every reason to stand well. He may hear conversations about the incidents of war or history, in which he will find it wise to avoid taking a part, lest his geography should be found wanting. On these occasions the strongest conviction that he can write Latin hexameters better than any of the company will hardly sustain self-respect under the detection of profound geographical or historical ignorance. *These, however, are only inconveniences;* and, to the sound English reason, are trifles compared with the discipline of the mind. But even in that point of view, all these accomplishments—and we must add to them mathematics—have their value in giving breadth and elasticity to the intellect, besides that opportunity of change which is necessary to many learners."

All this admitted ignorance and incapacity are, it seems, "only inconveniences—trifles compared with the discipline of the mind." But it occurs to ask, How far are this ignorance and incapacity compatible with the much-lauded discipline of the mind; and would not the removal of this very ignorance and incapacity, as the *Times* itself admits in the very next sentence, do much to promote the discipline of the mind? Everywhere, and for ever, do we find this unhappy and groundless contrast between what is called, almost with a sneer, "*useful* knowledge," and mental discipline,—as if it were only through useless knowledge, or stuff too useless to be called knowledge, that mental discipline can be attained. Similarly pernicious and baseless is the current preference of what is acquired with toil and pain to what is acquired with ease and pleasure.* Of the body it is true that only what food is taken with healthy appetite can be healthfully digested, and converted into blood and tissue; and so is it with the mind. Is it reasonable to believe that utility and pleasure are inevitably divorced from educational influence, and that the true value of learning lies in its inutility and repulsiveness?† To classical teaching I utterly refuse, in any case, the monopoly of mental discipline; and in the case of those who never get beyond the grammatical and verbal husks, I contend that the mental influence is, to the young, for evil, not for good. But the advocate of the prevailing system, if driven from the defence of mental discipline, shelters himself behind other screens, such as physical training, *genius loci*, influence of numbers, *esprit de corps*, advantage of association with youths of rank and breeding. Of none of these things do I need or wish to speak disparagingly; though, as regards the last, it does strike me as strange that those who spurn *utility* in the matter of young men's learning should lay stress upon utility of a much lower kind in the associations that they form. But all these things are quite irrelevant, unless it can be shown that a change of subjects and mode of teaching would be fatal to their existence. Would boys be less addicted to football, cricket, and boating, if they ceased to be ignoramuses? Would the influence of numbers, and of the rivalry which "develops the manly

* ψυχῇ βίαιον οὐδὲν ἐμμενὲς μάθημα.—PLATO.

† "How stupidly wrong are they who speak of the dryness of study. And how marvellously sagacious were the fathers of the Latin language who gave to the word *studium* the double meaning, *study* and *desire*."—W. P. SCARGILL, *Essays*, &c., p. 373. 1857.

English character," so much admired, we are told, and envied by continental nations, perish if boys were taught what interests, not disgusts, them, and what it is of the utmost importance for their own and for others' sakes that they should know? If not, then away with such flimsy pretexts, which do but thinly veil an obstinate resistance to educational improvement! If I complain of scarcity and badness of food, is it any answer to tell me that the air is very pure, and the prospect exquisitely fine. I rejoin, "Give me better food, and more of it, and I will better appreciate the purity of the air and the loveliness of the prospect." I remember an advertisement of a vacant curacy in one of the Southern counties, which is scarcely a burlesque on this mode of reasoning. It ended thus,—"The salary is small, but the sea-bathing is excellent." The learning is small (for, as Mr. Gladstone says—

> "Boys learn but little here below,
> And learn that little ill,")—

but the cricket is excellent. If physical exercise and amusement (for which, by the way, I have long and earnestly pleaded) are indeed the leading purpose of our great schools,—and it would seem that at Eton they absorb a very large proportion of the school-life,—then let the fact be avowed and acted on: *cedat armis toga;* let the gown give place to bat, ball, and wickets; let cricket be promoted, *vice* classics superseded, and let the Head-Mastership be transferred to that *vir candidatus*, Mr. Lillywhite, or the classically denominated Mr. Julius Cæsar. Possibly, however, if cricket were made compulsory and primary, and classics optional and secondary, we should have less of the former and more of the latter, and the change might be fatal to the very supremacy of the physical training which it was intended to promote. But, seriously, it is deplorable to see how parents suffer themselves to be hoodwinked by the substitution for sound mental culture of things which need not be its substitutes at all, but which ought to be its firm allies and faithful friends. Even Mr. Gladstone (who, in spite of his brilliant and versatile talents, his rich and various acquirements, is still a striking instance of the defect which Mr. Faraday, in his evidence, points out in men classically trained)* speaks, in his letter to the Commissioners, of "the low utilitarian argument in matter of education, for giving it what is termed a practical direction;" and declares it to be "so plausible, that we may on the whole be thankful that the *instincts* of the country have resisted what in argument it has been ill able to confute." In some amazement I turn up the word *instinct* in Johnson's Dictionary; it is there defined: "Desire or aversion acting in the mind without the intervention of reason or deliberation; the power determining the will of brutes." I will not ask whether instincts may be acquired, or are necessarily innate. But never before, probably, was so singular a duty assigned to instinct as that of judging of the comparative value of rival methods of school training. Falstaff indeed says,—"Beware instinct. The lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter; I was a coward on instinct." To be an educationist on instinct, and by instinct to recognize the true system of education, is a feat so remarkable, that I can hardly believe it to be within the capacity of any one man, much less of a whole nation. Is it not, besides, the very business of reason to lessen the exclusive domain of instinct, and to guide instinct, where it does not take its place? Mr. Gladstone's recent speech in the House of Commons presents many subjects for remark; but time permits me to say here only that when he charges the ineffectiveness of school-teaching on the "luxury and self-indulgence" in which we live, and "the laxity which is *essentially* connected with the

* See Frazer's Magazine for February, 1864, p. 156.

signal prosperity and wealth of the country," he virtually, though unconsciously, passes the severest censure on those great capitals of education, in which generation after generation of our richer upper classes have been allowed to grow up without any guidance whatever as to the true duties, any more than as to the true sources, of wealth. But here is involved a conception of youthful training which as yet has dawned on only a very few minds, and of which the Commissioners, unlike those who reported not long ago on the state of English primary schools, seem never to have even heard. For aught they appear to know, the successful attempts made, for some years past, in and near this city, to convey to poorer children knowledge and training in this most vital subject, embracing as it does all our economic and other social relations, and full of interest and instruction for both rich and poor, might as well have been made in Nova Zembla. The rising sun of education, unlike the physical sun, would seem to touch first with his beams the lowly valley, and then, through mist and cloud, slowly to climb to the hill-tops.

This omission in the Commissioners' Report detracts largely, in my opinion, from its value. But I trust I am duly grateful for what I find. The two great wedges—Natural Science and Modern Languages*—which are destined, sooner or later, to rend asunder the present system, have, at all events, received a vigorous impulse which will not be lost. No *vis inertiæ* can for ever prevail against testimony so clear and so emphatic as that of Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Hooker, Professor Owen, Sir Charles Lyell, Sir John Herschel, Professor Faraday, and others,† to the value of Natural Science, not for purposes of "low practical utility," but as an instrument of mental discipline.

Meantime, it is cheering to have a statement like the following from so eminent an authority as the Rev. Dr. Mortimer, Head Master of the City of London School:—

"It is my opinion, founded on very considerable experience, that the limited time given to classics, in comparison with other public schools, is fully made up by the increased mental power obtained by an acquaintance with many other subjects. At all events, it is a fact, that the university career of pupils of the City of London School is eminently successful; and the reason seems to be, that from being early trained to take up several different subjects of study, they acquire the faculty of readily adapting themselves to the work set before them, and bring to it a large amount of collateral information." (Vol. ii. p. 580.) *

Other evidence to a like effect might be quoted. (See Vol. ii. p. 17.)

Still more encouraging is the declaration of Charles Neate, Esq., M.A., Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford:—

"We cannot go on for ever learning all that our ancestors learned 300 years ago, and all

* "The interchange of ideas with the contemporaneous world is of as much importance as the preservation of the ideas of the past; and the tongues which men now speak are those which men should learn to understand."—Sir ROBERT KANE, 1849.

† I regret that Professor Tyndal and Drs. Lankester and Lyon Playfair were not examined.

* "It is generally agreed that the greater attention now given at most schools to mathematics, history, and modern languages, whilst it has advanced those subjects, and proved beneficial by enlarging and stimulating the mind, has not injured scholarship."—Report, vol. i. p. 25.

"We collect from the evidence that, speaking generally (there are not a few exceptions), boys who succeed in classics succeed also in mathematics and in modern languages. This shows that, ordinarily, any boy of good capacity may with advantage study each of these subjects, and may study them all together."—Report, vol. i. p. 16.

"As an almost invariable rule, the men who do best in outlying subjects also do best in scholarship. Men of great intelligence will naturally be greedy of all learning; and there is something, too, in the awakening of a boy's mind, even if he is not of high ability, which far more than pays for the outlay of time and energy."—Rev. G. W. KITCHIN, M.A., Junior Censor of Christ Church, Oxford. Report, vol. ii. p. 12.

"During the years that I was at Rugby, from 1841 to 1847, the knowledge of mathematics and modern languages advanced. Special masters were appointed to teach those subjects. Scholarship during the same time advanced. Mathematics, history and geography, and modern languages should certainly be taught at school. Nor need scholarship suffer. The study of modern languages would tend to improve, not to injure, scholarship."—Rev. C. W. SANDFORD, M.A., Senior Censor of Christ-Church. Report, vol. ii. p. 11.

that has grown up as new knowledge since then. The time must come when we must make a selection and a sacrifice. I think it has come now." (Vol. ii. p. 49.)

The great practical remedy suggested by Mr. Neate almost exactly coincides with what I have advocated for many years. He proposes "that the learning of either Latin or Greek should be postponed till the age of 12 years [I would say 14]; boys being up to that time taught their own language and one foreign language, together with something of the literature of either; also arithmetic, some portion of natural history, and, of course, the facts of their own history; in all which those boys more especially that come from public schools are almost incredibly ignorant." (Vol. ii. p. 49.) If the age of 14 were adopted, the course of instruction up to that age would be, and ought to be, considerably enlarged. Mr. Neate goes on:—"I believe a boy so prepared would learn more Latin and Greek between the ages of 12 and 16, than he does now between the ages of 10 and 18." "But in order to ensure this, great improvements are needed in our methods of teaching." (*Ibid.*) This proposal, heretical as it may appear, is supported by high and ample authority; but, not to stray too far from the Report before us, I will quote only a short passage from a pamphlet, "Oxford Reform and Oxford Professors," published in 1854, by H. Halford Vaughan, Esq., M.A., one of the Commissioners, and then Regius Professor of History in the University of Oxford:—"I believe it might possibly be found that we have hitherto learned the classical languages painfully, imperfectly, and unseasonably,—slowly imbibing rules by rote and by the ear, because we learn them at an age too unripe for a rational appreciation of such abstract propositions, and losing thereby great part of the discipline so much boasted in the course of acquisition." (p. 30, note.)*

Of three plans which have been devised, and two of which are actually in operation in various places in this and other countries, for evading the ever-increasing difficulties of the present system, this is, I am convinced, by far the simplest, the most effective, and the one destined ultimately to prevail. Against the other two plans, whether that of having side by side, in the same institution, a collegiate and a non-collegiate department, or that called in France "*bifurcation*," by which boys who have been taught together up to 14 and 15 diverge, some to the modern or non-collegiate, others to the ancient or collegiate side of the school,—there are very grave objections. On both the Commissioners report with caution rather than approval. The third plan, according to which all boys up to the age of 14 should be taught together all the subjects really most important for them all to know, whatever their lot in life,—classics being reserved for those who should remain long enough at school to profit by the study,

* "We begin too soon, and we begin the wrong way. Rousseau says that one of the great arts of education is to know how to lose time. We ought to learn, in his sense, to lose a little more time, to delay a little longer before we begin teaching Latin and Greek."—Sir THOS. WYSE, "Educa. Reform," 1836, p. 166.

"We are of opinion that the study of the learned languages ought not to be commenced till the higher functions of fancy and feeling begin to stir, and a taste for literature and reading begins to bud in the soul."—Professor BLACKIE, 1842.

"I must say that in fixing upon ten as the earliest age [at which the study of Latin or Greek ought to begin], I am by no means convinced that it is best to begin so young. Judging from several instances which have come under my own observation, I am strongly inclined to believe that twelve, or even fourteen, would be a better period for commencing Latin."—Dr. J. H. JERRARD, formerly Classical Examiner in the London University.

"Has the idea ever been suggested, that the public schools should take nearly all of classical study on themselves [*i. e.*, relieving the preparatory schools from it]; that they should at least give up an entrance examination in Greek, but require a higher standard in reading, spelling, history, &c., and French, which might thus form one of the principal previous studies, and then would not be so much required afterwards. . . . . In this case, our sons would not go on to public schools with so much Latin and Greek; but I believe they would have a far greater capacity for classical studies, and pleasure in studying, than they ever now have."—Letter signed "C.," in *Times*, 12th May, 1864.

whether they go on to a University or not,—would render classical instruction at once easier and more effective in three ways: 1st, By the reduced number of those who take part in it; 2nd, By their greater age; 3rd, By the greater development of their intelligence, due to their previous training in subjects more level to their juvenile capacities, and more congenial to their tastes. This innovation was, doubtless, too formidable to be considered by the Commissioners; but their Report, valuable as it is, is not finally conclusive, and their suggestions, in so far as they may be adopted, will render the introduction of it easier hereafter. Any one who has had the twofold experience of teaching to young pupils what they learn willingly, and what they learn *invitâ* (*ut aiunt*) *Minervâ*, and who is competent to more than "gerund-grinding," will hail with gladness a change which will render his labour at once more pleasing and more efficient.

There are yet many things of which I should wish to speak,

"Sed jam tempus equûm fumantia solvere colla."

In conclusion, let me hope that this Report will be of service to the large body of private-school teachers who chiefly constitute this College of Preceptors. Disparaged and maligned as they too often are, they will not, I trust, rest satisfied in the belief that, bad as private schools may sometimes be, the large public schools have now been shown to be, most probably, much worse. Rather let warning be taken from the signal and melancholy failure here set forth, all the more strikingly because by friendly hands; let the causes of that failure be anxiously considered; let all slavish copying of models proved to be bad be thrown aside, and let advantage be taken of the private school teacher's greater freedom, of the greater flexibility of his system, unhampered by charters, and traditions, and long prestige, to adopt whatever changes may seem most accordant, not with the whim of the moment, but with the growing tendencies and necessities of modern life. The *tu quoque* argument is very well as a retort to one-sided satirists; it is a poor excuse for inaction and indifference to improvement. If, as is possible, a Commission be appointed by Parliament for inquiry into the state of middle-class school-teaching, I trust that you will aid, not obstruct, its investigations; that you will not close your doors against examination. You have, or ought to have, nothing to conceal. A good school, like a good housewife, can never be caught *en deshabille*. I for one do not fear the result. There cannot surely be many private schoolmasters who, under examination the most rigorous, would rival the evasiveness, the inconsistency, the narrowness, and the petulance displayed by the Rev. Head Master of Eton, or the humiliating want of acquaintance with the moral evil pervading his own school, and of power to put it down, revealed by the Rev. Head Master of Westminster. But a much higher level than all this would still be too low. To the progress now going on in private middle-class schools, in schools for primary instruction of both sexes, and not least, in schools for girls of the middle and upper classes, much more than even to the direct effect of such a revelation as this, startling as it is, do I look for the steady rise and swell of public opinion which shall sweep away the accumulated abuses in our public schools.

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